of the army that was defending its lines against their well-directed and sustained attacks. Thus Serbia, Roumania and Gaporetto came to them as a surprise. The Germans were able to withdraw several divisions from France for those attacks, when Joffre and Haig were convinced that the offensive they were then prosecuting had reduced the German Army to a gasping exhaustion. You could have safely depended upon their paying no heed to rumours that would, if true, oblige them to weaken their own forces and thus imperil the chance of winning the dazzling triumph that they felt convinced would soon crown their strategy in the West.

A surprise may therefore be due to the refusal to accept unpalatable warnings—that is, warnings which

Refusal to ^° not ^ *nto* t^ie P^ans °f Headquarters.

believe The classic examples of that are Joffre's *unpalatable* conduct at the beginning of the War and *intelligence* subsequently at Verdun; Kitchener's, Robertson's, and Joffre's indifference to the reports of Austro-German and Bulgarian attacks in Serbia in 1915; the assumption by Haig that the Germans were so shattered by Passchendaele that they could not spare a division for the Italian Front; and the refusal of Petain and Haig in 1918 to pay any attention to the many indications of an attack in front of Amiens.

On none of these occasions did it suit these great Commanders to believe in warnings which were sub-

sequently authenticated.

Let us examine two or three of these illustrations of my thesis.

(a) The German Advance through Belgium in August, 1914.

Perhaps the most surprising feature of this was the fact that it took the French by surprise at all. But Joffre was taken unawares by the wide northern sweep of